

VZCZCXRO8845
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0830 0790655
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 190655Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6322
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 0482

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000830

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2018

TAGS: [IZ](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH GOI/MFA ON MAKHMOUR REFUGEE CAMP

REF: A. A. ANKARA 0280

[1](#)B. B. BAGHDAD 380

[1](#)C. C. ANKARA 0158

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR RYAN C. CROCKER FOR REASONS 1.4
(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In a March 15 meeting with MFA U/S Hamoud, MNF-I DCS for Strategic Effects and Deputy PolMil Couns briefed Hamoud on their March 6 trip to Makhmour Refugee camp, and sought to get GOI views on closing the camp and the way ahead. Hamoud suggested that the GOI, GOT and UNHCR meet to discuss issues surrounding closing the camp. Bergner said that he and D/PolMil Couns will travel to Irbil soon to meet with KRG security director Karim Sinjari and UNHCR Irbil rep Charles Lynch. Deputy PolMil Couns passed to Hamoud points for a proposed bilateral MOU with Kuwait on the Khwar Abdallah waterway project detailing wreck removal operations. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) MNF-I DCS of Strategic Effects MG Bergner and Deputy Political Military Counselor Sasahara briefed MFA U/S Mohammad Haj Hamoud March 15 on their March 6 visit to Makhmour Refugee Camp, and reiterated USG interest in closing the camp, acknowledging the political obstacles that had impeded previous efforts. The purpose of the camp visit was to re-engage with the parties, particularly UNHCR. Deputy PolMil Couns noted that the recent trip to Ankara by President Talabani and his frank talks with the GOT leadership presented an opportunity to revisit the issue within this new atmosphere and move forward on the political track. Discussion of closure of Makhmour Refugee camp was a good test case for GOT thinking on amnesty and bilateral cooperation. MG Bergner said he and PolMil Couns would follow up the trip to Makhmour with a trip to Irbil to meet with KRG security Director Karim Sinjari and UNHCR Irbil rep Charles Lynch.

[1](#)3. (C) Dr. Hamoud said the GOI sent a note verbale to GOT on February 7, 2008 to Turkish Ambassador to Iraq Kanbey requesting a meeting on Makhmour (ref. A), and informed UNHCR of their interest in the meeting. To date, the MFA has not received a response from either party.

[1](#)4. (C) Hamoud said the GOI believes that the GOT does not want to offer camp residents asylum, rather, the Turks are thinking more in terms of prosecution. The GOI proposed that a list of camp residents be sent to the GOT for vetting,⁸ which would determine whether a particular camp resident would be subject to charges upon return to Turkey.

[1](#)5. (C) The GOI supports a new UNHCR census of camp residents and reconfirmation of the civilian nature of the camp. Hamoud expressed a preference for moving the camp from its current KRG location to put distance between the residents and possible PKK contact and influence. Such a move, he said would make it easier to confirm the civilian nature of the camp. Hamoud does not believe that the majority of camp

residents have PKK connections, but realizes that the GOT thinks otherwise.

¶6. (C) The GOI has looked at all the possibilities for &durable solutions⁸ for camp residents, including local integration outside of the KRG, (Note: Absent the full rights of citizenship this would not meet the UNHCR criteria for &durable solution⁸. End note), resettlement to a third country, or repatriation to Turkey for those eligible within the framework of some type of amnesty program. Hamoud noted that local integration would be the last option in the event the others are not resettled or repatriated.

¶7. (C) Hamoud suggested that the next step forward on this issue should be a meeting with GOI, GOT, UNHCR, possibly with the assistance of the USG. The GOI will discuss this possibility with the Turkish Ambassador) although the Ambassador has been out of the country for the last two months. Hamoud noted that Kanbay departed Iraq two months ago; implying linkage to Kanbey,s extended absence to recent Turkish military operations in northern Iraq. He said that the GOI decided to leave its ambassador in Ankara, rather than get into a diplomatic tit-for-tat with the GOT.

¶8. (C) At the conclusion of the meeting, Deputy PolMil Couns passed to Hamoud points for a proposed bilateral MOU with Kuwait on the Khwar Abdallah waterway project detailing wreck removal operations (septel).

CROCKER